

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. An apparatus for socking molluscs to produce at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said apparatus including: means for supplying  
5 at least one elongate sock for injection with molluscs; means for injecting said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock; and means for driving said at least one elongate sock through said apparatus; wherein, in use, said injecting means continually socks said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock as said at least one elongate sock is conveyed by said driving means to produce  
10 said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.
2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said apparatus further includes means for supplying at least one elongate rope into said at least one elongate sock simultaneously with the injection of said molluscs by said  
15 injection means, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line produced by said apparatus includes said at least one elongate sock having said injected molluscs and said at least one elongate rope socked therein.
3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein said means for  
20 supplying said at least one elongate rope includes at least one rope supply wheel.
4. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said means for supplying said at least one elongate sock is releasably attached  
25 to said apparatus to facilitate ease of application of said at least one elongate sock to said means for supplying said at least one elongate sock.
5. The apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said means for supplying said at least one elongate sock is at least one  
30 socking applicator including an outer tubular body onto the outside of which said at least one elongate sock is loaded, and at least one tubular insert body having a predefined smaller diameter to that of said outer body.

6. The apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said at least one tubular insert body is removably disposed within said outer tubular body and, in use, is adapted to receive within an inner surface thereof said at least one  
5 elongate sock ready for injection with said molluscs by said injecting means.

7. The apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said at least one tubular insert body provides a density of said molluscs within said at least one elongate mollusc growing line relative to the internal diameter of said inner  
10 surface of said at least one tubular insert body.

8. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7, wherein said at least one socking applicator is capable of providing different mollusc densities within said at least one elongate mollusc growing line by introducing  
15 into said at least one socking applicator at least one further tubular insert body with a predefined internal diameter different to that of said at least one tubular insert body.

9. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8, wherein  
20 said at least one socking applicator further includes at least one sock feed flange disposed on at least one end thereof, and wherein said at least one sock feed flange is adapted to receive said at least one elongate sock loaded onto said outer tubular body and to feed said at least one elongate sock into said inner surface of said at least one tubular insert body.

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10. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein said at least one sock feed flange is adapted to provide frictional resistance to the flow of said at least one elongate sock as said at least one elongate sock is drawn away from said outer tubular body and into said at least one tubular insert body, and  
30 wherein, in use, said frictional resistance assists the socking action of said apparatus by controlling the removal of said at least one elongate sock from said at least one socking applicator.

11. The apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said injecting means includes at least one hopper for receiving said molluscs.

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12. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein said at least one hopper has at least one opening therein, said at least one opening cooperating with at least one conveyor means, wherein, in use, said at least one conveyor means is adapted to feed said molluscs from within said at least one hopper, through said at least one opening and to said at least one socking applicator.

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13. The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein said apparatus includes one hopper with one opening and said opening is a slot-like opening disposed at a base of said hopper, and wherein said opening is broader at one end thereof to provide a larger open area for said molluscs to pass through.

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14. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein said apparatus includes one conveyor means, and wherein said conveyor means is disposed below said slot-like opening and is adapted to convey said molluscs within said hopper, along said slot-like opening towards said larger open area, and out of said hopper.

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15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein said molluscs are fed to said at least one socking applicator via at least one funnel.

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16. The apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein said at least one funnel is adapted to receive said molluscs from said at least one hopper and, in use, to supply said molluscs to said at least one socking applicator.

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17. The apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said means for driving said at least one elongate sock includes at least one drive wheel that is adapted to engage and draw said at least one elongate

sock and said at least one elongate mollusc growing line through said at least one socking applicator to, in use, facilitate the continual forming of said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

5           18.     The apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein said at least one drive wheel cooperates with at least one guide wheel capable of assisting said drawing of said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is formed.

10           19.     The apparatus as claimed in claim 17 or claim 18, wherein said at least one drive wheel includes paired upwardly projecting ridges arranged around an outer periphery thereof.

              20.     The apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein said paired ridges  
15 define V-shaped recesses between respective pairs that are adapted to accommodate elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

              21.     The apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein said V-shaped recesses provide said at least one drive wheel with a means of engaging and  
20 driving elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

              22.     The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 19 to 21, wherein said paired ridges include tapered faces in the direction of travel of said at least one drive wheel to assist said at least one drive wheel in grabbing and engaging  
25 said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing through said apparatus.

              23.     The apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is adapted to be  
30 suspended below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for said molluscs during their growth.

24. An apparatus for attaching at least one support device to at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said apparatus including: means for providing said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and means for applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is held by said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

25. The apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is selected from one or more of the following: any suitable growing rope, any suitable growing rope that is socked with any suitable mesh sock, and/or any suitable mesh sock.

26. The apparatus as claimed in claim 24 or claim 25, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes an elongate mesh sock which has been socked with molluscs and contains an elongate core growing rope.

27. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 26, wherein said means for providing said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one drive wheel that is adapted to engage and draw said at least one elongate mollusc growing line through said apparatus.

28. The apparatus as claimed in claim 27, wherein said at least one drive wheel cooperates with at least one guide wheel capable of assisting said drawing of said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is drawn through said apparatus.

29. The apparatus as claimed in claim 27 or claim 28, wherein said at least one drive wheel includes paired upwardly projecting ridges arranged around an outer periphery thereof.

5 30. The apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein said paired ridges define V-shaped recesses between respective pairs that are adapted to accommodate elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

31. The apparatus as claimed in claim 30, wherein said V-shaped  
10 recesses provide said at least one drive wheel with a means of engaging and driving elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

32. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 29 to 31, wherein said paired ridges include tapered faces in the direction of travel of said at least  
15 one drive wheel to assist said at least one drive wheel in grabbing and engaging said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing through said apparatus.

33. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 32, wherein  
20 said means for providing said at least one support device includes at least one slide which cooperates with said means for applying said at least one support device, wherein said at least one support device is loaded onto said at least one slide ready for application by said means for applying said at least one support device.

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34. The apparatus as claimed in claim 33, wherein said at least one slide is adapted to facilitate the supply of one support device at a time to said means for applying said at least one support device.

30 35. The apparatus as claimed in claim 33 or claim 34, wherein support devices are supplied in a queue via said at least one slide to said means for applying said at least one support device.

36. The apparatus as claimed in claim 33 or claim 34, wherein said at least one slide is adapted to receive at least one weight, wherein said at least one weight is adapted to be loaded onto said at least one slide after said at least one support device in order to drive said at least one support device to said means for applying said at least one support device.

37. The apparatus as claim in claim 36, wherein more than one support device is loaded onto said at least one slide in a cartridge form.

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38. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 37, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one set of mating jaws adapted to be drawn into engagement with one another in order to grab and releasably hold said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

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39. The apparatus as claimed in claim 38 when dependent on any one of claims 26 to 37, wherein said at least one set of mating jaws include V-shaped opposed peripheral mating surfaces that, in use, engage and compress said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said jaws, mesh sock compression relative to said elongate core growing rope and location of said elongate core growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

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40. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 37, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one jaw plate which can engage and drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into and through a nip formed between at least one set of rotating wheels disposed on parallel axes, said at least one set of rotating wheels being adapted to engage and induce a rotational force on said at least one elongate mollusc growing line when said at least one elongate

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mollusc growing line is driven through said nip formed between said at least one set of rotating wheels.

41. The apparatus as claimed in claim 40 when dependent on any  
5 one of claims 26 to 37, wherein said at least one jaw plate has a V-shaped peripheral engaging surface and said rotational force induced by said at least one set of rotating wheels engages and compresses said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said at least one set of rotating wheels, mesh sock compression relative to said  
10 elongate core growing rope and location of said elongate core growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

42. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 37, wherein  
15 said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one control plate defining a generally U-shaped opening therein and including at least one slot bordering each side of said U-shaped opening, said slots defining at least one track for receiving and guiding at least two mating quadrants therein, said U-shaped opening being adapted to receive  
20 said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to engage and drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into and through a nip formed between said at least two mating quadrants, said at least two mating quadrants adapted to engage and induce a rotational force on said at least one elongate mollusc growing line when said at least one elongate mollusc growing  
25 line is driven through said nip formed between said at least two mating quadrants.

43. The apparatus as claimed in claim 42 when dependent on any  
one of claims 26 to 37, wherein said rotational force induced by said at least  
30 mating two quadrants in cooperation with said at least one control plate engages and compresses said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said at least two mating



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quadrants, mesh sock compression relative to said elongate core growing rope, and location of said elongate core growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

5           44.     The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 39, 41 or 43, wherein said attachment area is substantially free from molluscs and ready for attachment of said at least one support device by said means for applying said at least one support device.

10           45.     The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 39 to 44, wherein said means for applying said at least one support device includes at least one push arm.

            46.     The apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein said at least one  
15 push arm is adapted, in use, to engage one support device from said at least one slide and to push said one support device into engagement with said at least one elongate mollusc growing line relative to said attachment area provided by said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

20           47.     The apparatus as claimed in claim 45 or claim 46, wherein said push arm is mechanically actuated by at least one ram means and/or any other suitable means able to drive said push arm.

25           48.     The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 47, wherein said at least one support device is selected from one or more of the following group: a planar support plate; a disc-shaped support plate; a support structure incorporating a series of protrusions; a support structure incorporating a ring-like support area; a cage-like structure; and/or, any suitable combination  
30 thereof.

49. The apparatus as claimed in claim 48, wherein said at least one support device includes any suitable attachment means that is able to facilitate attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

5 50. The apparatus as claimed in claim 49, wherein said attachment means is selected from one or more of the following group: an inwardly tapered slot for receiving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to wedge said at least one elongate mollusc growing line between opposed sides of said inwardly slot to facilitate attachment thereto; a  
10 skewer-like projection; and/or any suitable clip-type arrangement.

51. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 32, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one jaw plate for receiving therein said at least one  
15 elongate mollusc growing line, and at least one push arm for engaging and driving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into said at least one jaw plate such that, in use, said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held in a compressed state in said at least one jaw plate by said at least one push arm.

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52. The apparatus as claimed in claim 51, wherein said means for providing said at least one support device includes at least one hopper, and wherein said means for applying said at least one support device includes at least one support device engaging push arm adapted to engage at least one  
25 support device from within said at least one hopper and to drive said at least one support device through said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held in said compressed state.

30 53. The apparatus as claimed in claim 51 or claim 52, wherein said at least one support device is at least one skewer.

54. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 52, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line having at least one support device attached thereto is adapted to be suspended below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for molluscs during their growth.

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55. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 52, wherein said at least one support device is attachable to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at any fixed location.

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56. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 24 to 52, wherein a body portion of said at least one support device is adapted to provide additional support area for said molluscs to attach to or be supported by as they grow.

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57. An apparatus for providing at least one elongate mollusc growing line having at least one support device attached thereto, said apparatus including: means for supplying at least one elongate sock for injection with molluscs; means for injecting said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock; and means for driving said at least one elongate sock through said apparatus, wherein, in use, said injection means continually socks said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock as said at least one elongate sock is conveyed by said driving means to provide said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and means for applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is held by said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

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58. The apparatus as claimed in claim 57, wherein said apparatus further includes means for supplying at least one elongate rope into said at least

one elongate sock simultaneously with the injection of said molluscs by said injection means, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line produced by said apparatus includes said at least one elongate sock having said injected molluscs and said at least one elongate rope socked therein.

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59. The apparatus as claimed in claim 58, wherein said means for supplying said at least one elongate rope includes at least one rope supply wheel.

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60. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 59, wherein said means for supplying said at least one elongate sock is releasably attached to said apparatus to facilitate ease of application of said at least one elongate sock to said means for supplying said at least one elongate sock.

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61. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 60, wherein said means for supplying said at least one elongate sock is at least one socking applicator including an outer tubular body onto the outside of which said at least one elongate sock is loaded, and at least one tubular insert body having a predefined smaller diameter to that of said outer body.

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62. The apparatus as claimed in claim 61, wherein said at least one tubular insert body is removably disposed within said outer tubular body and, in use, is adapted to receive within an inner surface thereof said at least one elongate sock ready for injection with said molluscs by said injecting means.

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63. The apparatus as claimed in claim 62, wherein said at least one tubular insert body provides a density of said molluscs within said at least one elongate mollusc growing line relative to the internal diameter of said inner surface of said at least one tubular insert body.

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64. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 61 to 63, wherein said at least one socking applicator is capable of providing different mollusc

densities within said at least one elongate mollusc growing line by introducing into said at least one socking applicator at least one further tubular insert body with a predefined internal diameter different to that of said at least one tubular insert body.

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65. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 62 to 64, wherein said at least one socking applicator further includes at least one sock feed flange disposed on at least one end thereof, and wherein said at least one sock feed flange is adapted to receive said at least one elongate sock loaded onto said outer tubular body and to feed said at least one elongate sock into said inner surface of said at least one tubular insert body.

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66. The apparatus as claimed in claim 65, wherein said at least one sock feed flange is adapted to provide frictional resistance to the flow of said at least one elongate sock as said at least one elongate sock is drawn away from said outer tubular body and into said at least one tubular insert body, and wherein, in use, said frictional resistance assists the socking action of said apparatus by controlling the removal of said at least one elongate sock from said at least one socking applicator.

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67. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 66, wherein said injecting means includes at least one hopper for receiving said molluscs.

68. The apparatus as claimed in claim 67, wherein said at least one hopper has at least one opening therein, said at least one opening cooperating with at least one conveyor means, wherein, in use, said at least one conveyor means is adapted to feed said molluscs from within said at least one hopper, through said at least opening and to said at least one socking applicator.

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69. The apparatus as claimed in claim 68, wherein said apparatus includes one hopper with one opening and said opening is a slot-like opening

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disposed at a base of said hopper, and wherein said opening is broader at one end thereof to provide a larger open area for said molluscs to pass through.

70. The apparatus as claimed in claim 69, wherein said apparatus  
5 includes one conveyor means, and wherein said conveyor means is disposed below said slot-like opening and is adapted to convey said molluscs within said hopper, along said slot-like opening towards said larger open area, and out of said hopper.

10 71. The apparatus as claimed in claim 68, wherein said molluscs are fed to said at least one socking applicator via at least one funnel.

72. The apparatus as claimed in claim 71, wherein said at least one  
15 funnel is adapted to receive said molluscs from said at least one hopper and, in use, to supply said molluscs to said at least one socking applicator.

73. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 72, wherein  
said means for driving said at least one elongate sock includes at least one  
drive wheel that is adapted to engage and draw said at least one elongate sock  
20 and said at least one elongate mollusc growing line through said at least one socking applicator to, in use, facilitate the continual forming of said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

74. The apparatus as claimed in claim 73, wherein said at least one  
25 drive wheel cooperates with at least one guide wheel capable of assisting said drawing of said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is formed.

75. The apparatus as claimed in claim 73 or claim 74, wherein said  
30 at least one drive wheel includes paired upwardly projecting ridges arranged around an outer periphery thereof.

76. The apparatus as claimed in claim 75, wherein said paired ridges define V-shaped recesses between respective pairs that are adapted to accommodate elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

5 77. The apparatus as claimed in claim 76, wherein said V-shaped recesses provide said at least one drive wheel with a means of engaging and driving elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

78. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 75 to 77, wherein  
10 said paired ridges include tapered faces in the direction of travel of said at least one drive wheel to assist said at least one drive wheel in grabbing and engaging said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing through said apparatus.

79. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 78, wherein  
15 said means for providing said at least one support device includes at least one slide which cooperates with said means for applying said at least one support device, wherein said at least one support device is loaded onto said at least one slide ready for application by said means for applying said at least one support  
20 device.

80. The apparatus as claimed in claim 79, wherein said at least one slide is adapted to facilitate the supply of one support device at a time to said means for applying said at least one support device.

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81. The apparatus as claimed in claim 79 or claim 80, wherein support devices are supplied in a queue via said at least one slide to said means for applying said at least one support device.

82. The apparatus as claimed in claim 79 or claim 80, wherein said  
30 at least one slide is adapted to receive at least one weight, wherein said at least one weight is adapted to be loaded onto said at least one slide after said at least

one support device in order to drive said at least one support device to said means for applying said at least one support device.

83. The apparatus as claim in claim 82, wherein more than one  
5 support device is loaded onto said at least one slide in a cartridge form.

84. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 83, wherein  
said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing  
line includes at least one set of mating jaws adapted to be drawn into  
10 engagement with one another in order to grab and releasably hold said at least  
one elongate mollusc growing line.

85. The apparatus as claimed in claim 84 when dependent on any  
one of claims 58 to 83, wherein said at least one set of mating jaws include V-  
15 shaped opposed peripheral mating surfaces that, in use, engage and compress  
said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous  
mollusc parting about said jaws, mesh sock compression relative to said at least  
one elongate rope socked therein and location of said at least one elongate rope  
within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one  
20 support device.

86. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 83, wherein  
said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing  
line includes at least one jaw plate which can engage and drive said at least one  
25 elongate mollusc growing line into and through a nip formed between at least  
one set of rotating wheels disposed on parallel axes, said at least one set of  
rotating wheels being adapted to engage and induce a rotational force on said at  
least one elongate mollusc growing line when said at least one elongate  
mollusc growing line is driven through said nip formed between said at least  
30 one set of rotating wheels.



87. The apparatus as claimed in claim 86 when dependent on any one of claims 58 to 83, wherein said at least one jaw plate has a V-shaped peripheral engaging surface and said rotational force induced by said at least one set of rotating wheels engages and compresses said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said at least one set of rotating wheels, mesh sock compression relative to said at least one elongate growing rope and location of said at least one elongate growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

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88. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 83, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one control plate defining a generally U-shaped opening therein and including at least one slot bordering each side of said U-shaped opening, said slots defining at least one track for receiving and guiding at least two mating quadrants therein, said U-shaped opening being adapted to receive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to engage and drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into and through a nip formed between said at least two mating quadrants, said at least two mating quadrants adapted to engage and induce a rotational force on said at least one elongate mollusc growing line when said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is driven through said nip formed between said at least two mating quadrants.

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89. The apparatus as claimed in claim 88 when dependent on any one of claims 58 to 83, wherein said rotational force induced by said at least two quadrants in cooperation with said at least one control plate engages and compresses said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said at least two quadrants, mesh sock compression relative to said at least one elongate growing rope and location of said at least one elongate growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

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90. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 85, 87 or 89,  
wherein said attachment area is substantially free from molluscs and ready for  
attachment of said at least one support device by said means for applying said  
5 at least one support device.

91. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 82 to 90, wherein  
said means for applying said at least one support device includes at least one  
push arm.  
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92. The apparatus as claimed in claim 91, wherein said at least one  
push arm is adapted, in use, to engage one support device from said at least one  
slide and to push said one support device into engagement with said at least  
one elongate mollusc growing line relative to said attachment area provided by  
15 said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing  
line.

93. The apparatus as claimed in claim 91 or claim 92, wherein said  
push arm is mechanically actuated by at least one ram means and/or any other  
20 suitable means able to drive said push arm.

94. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 93, wherein  
said at least one support device is selected from one or more of the following  
group: a planar support plate; a disc-shaped support plate; a support structure  
25 incorporating a series of protrusions; a support structure incorporating a ring-  
like support area; a cage-like structure; and/or, any suitable combination  
thereof.

95. The apparatus as claimed in claim 94, wherein said at least one  
30 support device includes any suitable attachment means that is able to facilitate  
attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

96. The apparatus as claimed in claim 95, wherein said attachment means is selected from one or more of the following group: an inwardly tapered slot for receiving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to wedge said at least one elongate mollusc growing line between opposed sides of said inwardly slot to facilitate attachment thereto; a  
5 skewer-like projection; and/or any suitable clip-type arrangement.

97. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 78, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing  
10 line includes at least one jaw plate for receiving therein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line, and at least one push arm for engaging and driving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into said at least one jaw plate such that, in use, said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held in a compressed state in said at least one jaw plate by said at  
15 least one push arm.

98. The apparatus as claimed in claim 97, wherein said means for providing said at least one support device includes at least one support device supply hopper, and wherein said means for applying said at least one support  
20 device includes at least one support device engaging push arm adapted to engage at least one support device from within said at least one support device supply hopper and to drive said at least one support device through said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held in said compressed state.

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99. The apparatus as claimed in claim 97 or 98, wherein said at least one support device is at least one skewer.

100. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 98, wherein  
30 said at least one elongate mollusc growing line having at least one support device attached thereto is adapted to be suspended below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for molluscs during their growth.

101. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 98, wherein said at least one support device is attachable to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at any fixed location.

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102. The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 57 to 98, wherein a body portion of said at least one support device is adapted to provide additional support area for said molluscs to attach to or be supported by as they grow.

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103. A method for socking molluscs to provide at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said method including the steps of: supplying at least one elongate sock for injection with molluscs; injecting said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock; and conveying said at least one elongate sock simultaneously whilst said molluscs are injected thereinto to produce said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

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104. The method as claimed in claim 103, further including the step of simultaneously feeding at least one elongate rope into said at least one elongate sock whilst said molluscs are injected into said at least one elongate sock to produce at least one elongate mollusc growing line having said injected molluscs and said at least one elongate rope socked therein.

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105. The method as claimed in claim 103 or claim 104, further including the step of suspending said at least one elongate mollusc growing line below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for said molluscs during their growth.

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106. A method for attaching at least one support device to at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said method including the steps of: providing said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing

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line; releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held.

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107. The method as claimed in claim 106, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is selected from one or more of the following: any suitable growing rope, any suitable growing rope that is socked with any suitable mesh sock, and/or any suitable mesh sock.

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108. The method as claimed in claim 106 or claim 107, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes an elongate mesh sock which has been socked with molluscs and contains an elongate core growing rope.

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109. The method as claimed in claim 108, wherein said step of releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line provides an attachment area for said at least one support device to be applied to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said attachment area being substantially free from molluscs and said elongate core growing rope being located within said elongate mesh sock to facilitate attachment of said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

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110. The method as claimed in any one of claims 106 to 109, wherein said at least one support device is selected from one or more of the following group: a planar support plate; a disc-shaped support plate; a support structure incorporating a series of protrusions; a support structure incorporating a ring-like support area; a cage-like structure; and/or, any suitable combination thereof.

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111. The method as claimed in any one of claims 106 to 110, wherein said at least one support device includes any suitable attachment means that is

able to facilitate attachment of said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

112. The method as claimed in claim 111, wherein said attachment  
5 means is selected from one or more of the following group: an inwardly tapered slot for receiving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to wedge said at least one elongate mollusc growing line between opposed sides of said inwardly slot to facilitate attachment thereto; a skewer-like projection; and/or any suitable clip-type arrangement.

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113. The method as claimed in any one of claims 106 to 112, further including the step of suspending said at least one elongate mollusc growing line having said at least one support device attached thereto below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for said molluscs during  
15 their growth.

114. The method as claimed in any one of claims 106 to 113, wherein more than one support device is applied to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at any predefined location.

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115. The method as claimed in any one of claims 106 to 114, wherein a body portion of said at least one support device is adapted to provide additional support area for said molluscs to attach to or be supported by as they grow.

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116. A method for providing at least one elongate mollusc growing line having at least one support device attached thereto, said method including the steps of: supplying at least one elongate sock for injection with molluscs; injecting said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock; and conveying said  
30 at least one elongate sock simultaneously whilst said molluscs are injected thereinto to produce said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate

mollusc growing line; releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held.

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117. The method as claimed in claim 116, further including the step of simultaneously feeding at least one elongate rope into said at least one elongate sock whilst said molluscs are injected into said at least one elongate sock to produce at least one elongate mollusc growing line having said injected molluscs and said at least one elongate rope socked therein.

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118. The method as claimed in claim 117, wherein said step of releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line provides an attachment area for said at least one support device to be applied to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said attachment area being substantially free from molluscs and said at least one elongate growing rope being located within said elongate mesh sock to facilitate attachment of said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

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119. The method as claimed in any one of claims 116 to 118, wherein said at least one support device is selected from one or more of the following group: a planar support plate; a disc-shaped support plate; a support structure incorporating a series of protrusions; a support structure incorporating a ring-like support area; a cage-like structure; and/or, any suitable combination thereof.

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120. The method as claimed in any one of claims 116 to 119, wherein said at least one support device includes any suitable attachment means that is able to facilitate attachment of said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

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121. The method as claimed in claim 120, wherein said attachment means is selected from one or more of the following group: an inwardly tapered slot for receiving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to wedge said at least one elongate mollusc growing line  
5 between opposed sides of said inwardly slot to facilitate attachment thereto; a skewer-like projection; and/or any suitable clip-type arrangement.

122. The method as claimed in any one of claims 116 to 121, further including the step of suspending said at least one elongate mollusc growing  
10 line having said at least one support device attached thereto below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for said molluscs during their growth.

123. The method as claimed in any one of claims 116 to 122, wherein  
15 more than one support device is applied to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at any predefined location.

124. The method as claimed in any one of claims 116 to 123, wherein a body portion of said at least one support device is adapted to provide  
20 additional support area for said molluscs to attach to or be supported by as they grow.